

## Proper Disposal of Unused or Expired Medicine

**Do not flush unused medicine down  
the toilet or drain.**

Some medicines could contaminate  
drinking water supplies or wells.

## How to Safely Discard Medicine

- Take the medicine (prescription or over-the-counter) out of its original container.
- Crush tablets or pills. Liquids, gels, ointments, or creams can be mixed with cat litter or used coffee grounds.
- Put the medicine into a disposable container with a lid or into a sealable plastic bag.
- Conceal or remove any personal information (including Rx number) on the empty containers by covering it with black permanent marker, duct tape, or by peeling it off.
- Place the sealed container or bag and the empty drug containers in the regular trash.

## Safe Disposal of Soiled or Bloody Items

- Put items in a sealed, leak-proof plastic bag.
- Put bags in regular trash.
- Use trash barrels with tight lids to avoid attracting animals.

## Rhode Island Department of Health

3 Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908  
401-222-5960 / RI Relay 711  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

## Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Office of Waste Management  
235 Promenade Street  
Providence, RI 02908  
401-222-2797  
[www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov)

## Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation

65 Shun Pike, Johnston, RI 02919  
401-942-1430  
[www.rirrc.org](http://www.rirrc.org)



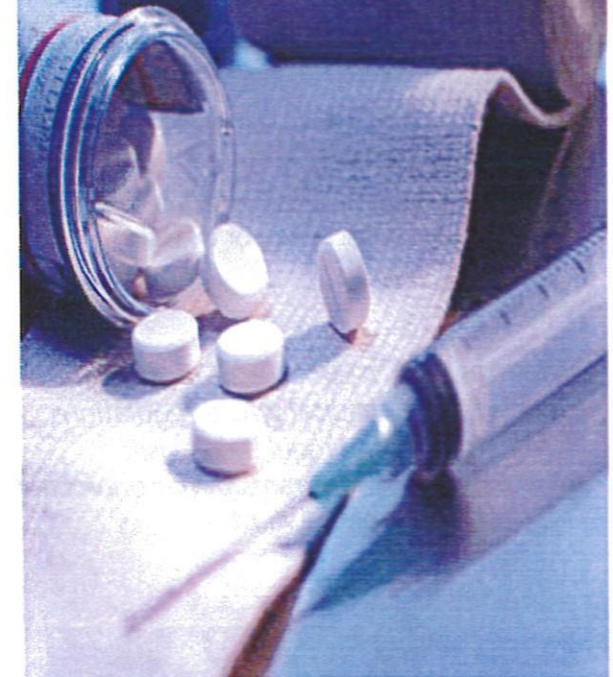
Scan for upcoming prescription  
take-back event information and  
locations in Rhode Island

[www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/](http://www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/)

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Disposing of  
Household  
Medical Waste  
and  
Medicines Safely



**Each year, people are seriously injured by improperly discarded needles.**

Trash handlers are at highest risk for injury but small children and pets could also be injured. Proper disposal of medical waste prevents environmental pollution and protects people and pets from accidental injury.

**Who should follow this guidance?**

- Anyone who gives injections to themselves or others at home.
- Anyone undergoing IV therapy or dialysis at home.
- Anyone who has sharp, bloodied items from home medical care.
- Anyone who has unused or expired medications (prescription or over-the-counter).

*Healthcare professionals and facilities must follow DEM's medical waste regulations.*

*To view the regulations visit:*

***[www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/topmedwa.htm](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/topmedwa.htm)***



**What is household medical waste?**

- **Sharps:** Needles, syringes, or lancets.
- **Soiled or Bloody Items:** Gauze, gloves, or bandages.
- **Any medication** that is expired, discolored, or unused.

**How can I safely discard medical waste?**

**Safe Disposal of Sharps**

- Put sharps into a sharps container immediately after use. Syringes with attached needles should be disposed of with the needle still attached.
- **Do not** try to remove, bend, break, or recap the needle.
- Store sharp containers safely away from children and pets.

**If you do not have a sharps container:**

- Put items into a puncture-proof plastic bleach, detergent, or coffee container and tape the lid closed.
- **Do not** use a glass container, soda can, juice bottle, or milk container for sharps.
- Put the full sealed container into the center of a full, preferably dark, trash bag.
- Put the trash bag in the regular trash.
- **Do not** put any type of sharp container in the recycle bin.



**Never put medical waste or containers of medical waste in recycling bins.**

